try'd? Or must a Man receive whatever is imported from abroad, or invented at home, tho' never so fantastical and erroneous, only because 'tis New? Should a skilful Painter be perswaded to despise the admirable Originals of *Italy*, because some People are better pleased with the ill-shap'd Daubings of *China* and *Japan*? Or because some few are delighted in Monsters, must others dislike that Symmetry and Proportion, which God himself observ'd in the Creation? This wou'd certainly be to impose very much upon Reason and Natural Liberty, to use their own Terms; especially since a Man ought to judge for himself more carefully in what is New, than in what has been received of Old.

Again: Altho' what is New should be true; yet the studious Search and Discovery of it, wou'd still be little better than Idleness, unless it were more useful and beneficial, than that which has been anciently true; But how many new and different Notions are there concerning the Works of Nature, or most important Points of Revelation, that are not only useless, but hurtful to the World, by disturbing Men's Minds, and distracting their Consciences, till all Opinions become equally indifferent, and *Reason* (tho that be the continual Cry) grows useless, and Passion only sways! Whereas the settling the Sense of any one Word, that leads to beneficial Knowledge, the inventing any Engine for Ease or Dispatch in honest Labour, is of more Consequence to the World than any of these Fancies: How much more so, is the teaching Men how to govern any one Passion, or regulate any one Appetite?

In a Word, our Modern Reaſoning and Philoſophizing, is very like our Modern Gard'ning; where the Fruit-trees which our Anceſtors planted are cut down, to make way for ever-green Barrenneſs, for Juniper, Holly, *&c.* which our Forefathers made ſhift to diſcover were good for nothing, but which we their wiſe Poſterity tranſplant from Heaths and Commons, and cultivate with vaſt Expence: In the ſame manner do People remove old Errors, or ingraft new ones, which are preſently admir'd and embrac'd, as freſh Diſcoveries of unbiaſs'd Reaſon; when alas they are nothing, nothing at all but the vain and empty Products of poliſh'd Sloth, and literate Idleneſs.

Thirdly, There are ſtill another ſort of People who are guilty of this, not only by miſapplying the Benefits of good Education, but by ſquandering 'em away in looſe and idle Converſation.

Such as have their Days at great Men's Tables, that *ſhow*, according as the Patron is in Humour, and are ready to buffoon Religion, Honour, Juſtice, and Integrity, under the Pretence of Wit and Humane Reaſon: At ſo vile a Price do ſome Men Dine!

Or elſe they are ſought out to give a Reliſh to Intemperance, and quicken the Dullneſs of Exceſs; to talk for thoſe who are to pay for them; yet talk below themſelves, or not to be underſtood: A hard Iſſue indeed of a Liberal Education! The Slaviſhneſs of This could never be endured, but that Intemperance ſinks the Man into the Brute, and levels all Underſtandings by degrees, *till the Years draw on, when they*, as well as all their Acquaintance,

tance, *ſhall ſay, they have no Pleaſure in them.*

But it is not himſelf alone that he uſes thus ill, but all that come nigh him, into whom he inſinuates his contagious Idleneſs, ſcattering Detraction and Infidelity, and doing all the lazy kinds of Miſchief, in the vain Licentiouſneſs which he magiſterially enjoys.

Well, but theſe People will tell us for Excuſe, that they are improving themſelves all this while; That Reading of Books is but a dull and melancholick Buſineſs, and a tedious way to Knowledge, whereas they *Read Men*, gain Information in a more lively and compendious way: 'Tis very well; Let Men be read, but then let 'em be the beſt Men; 'tis in this, as in all Learning, not how much, but how well we read; not how much Company, but how good we keep: But as a ſenſible Man can never admire that Perſons Learning, who reads nothing but Novels, ſcurrilous Libels, or looſe Pamphlets; ſo will he as little value that Man's Knowledge, who reads (as he calls it) only Drunkards and Buffoons.

To Read a looſe Fellow, is as ſcandalous to ones Vertue, as to Read a Fool, is to ones Underſtanding; and yet ſuch are the Authors that theſe People converſe withal to improve their Knowledge: And therefore notwithſtanding this grave Pretence, whether one Reads, or is to be Read, 'twill be at beſt but an *unprofitable* Entertainment; but is commonly much worſe, and ends in the loſs of that Wit or Learning which they had before, and reduces them to the greateſt Want, Contempt, and Miſery: It being obſervable, that they who have been moſt dextrous in curing the Spleen in others, have been

moſt unfortunate in bringing it upon themſelves; have gone on laughing and jeſting, without applying themſelves to any Calling or Profeſſion, till they have outliv'd not their Judgment but their Fancy, ſurviv'd their Wit as well as their Health; till when Age and Poverty increaſes, they are forc'd to drag along a diſeaſed Body to ſome Rich Relations, or Haughty Upſtart's Table; where every one will have the ſame ill-natur'd Pleaſure, which the Lords of the *Philiſtines* took, in cauſing *Sampſon*, when his Sight and Strength were gone, to *make Sport before them.*

Thus I have gone through three of thoſe things which I propoſed to diſcourſe upon, and ſhew'd what Benefits you have received from God, what Obligations you are under to improve them, and what Advantages may be gained by doing ſo, and withal given you ſome particular Inſtances of ſuch ſorts of Idleneſs, as proceed from the Corruption and Miſuſe of Good Parts and good Education; and this I have endeavoured to do in ſuch a manner, as might not give Suſpicion of any cenſorious Sourneſs, or particular Reflection, but as I thought be moſt proper for a meeting of this Nature.

But now, *Gentlemen*, *School-Fellows*, and *Fellow-Chriſtians!* Let us turn our Eyes towards another kind of Proſpect, and conſider ſeriouſly,

IV. The ſad End of all theſe ſeveral ways of being *Unprofitable*, and the dreadful Puniſhment which attends thoſe that are ſo.

Caſt ye the Unprofitable Servant into outer Darkneſs. Theſe are ſuppoſed to be the Words of our Crucify'd

fy'd Redeemer, when returning in *His Father's Glory*, to *judge the World in Righteouſneſs*; 'tis *His* Servants that we are, *His* Gifts they are which we ought to improve, and thoſe too purchas'd by *His* moſt Precious Blood.

Thou then that art the Servant of *That* God, who came into the World to die for thee; yet came in ſuch a manner, as not to have where to lay his Bleſſed Head; Doſt *Thou* ſuffer the Bleſſings which thou haſt received from Him, the Underſtanding, Learning, Wealth, or Honour, to be loſt, or miſuſed in Pompous Luxury and Intemperance?

Thou who believeſt in *that Jeſus*, who went about on Foot, ſuffering Heat, Cold, Hunger, Thirſt, Wearineſs; yet all the while *doing Good*; Canſt *Thou* be ſo ſtupid, ſo dully ſlothful, as to ſit ſtill always; doing nothing that is good for thy ſelf, or others; or rather doing what is evil? Art thou too Good, or too Great, to uſe and employ thoſe very things which make thee ſo? Nay, which would make thee Greater and Better ſtill, if once worthily employ'd.

If *the Earth*, that heavy and ſtupid Maſs of groſſeſt Matter, upon its Fruitfulneſs *receives Bleſſing from God, but that which bears Thorns and Briars is rejected, and is nigh unto Curſing, whoſe End is to be burnt*; What ſhall become of that Soul that will be ſlothful, altho' 'tis Spiritual? That is contented to be ſtupid, notwithſtanding the Freedom of its Will? That is made Free, Spiritual, and Immortal, and all to no purpoſe? Alas, when our Talents are *canker'd thro' Idleneſs; When the Ruſt of them ſhall be a Witneſs againſt us, and eat our Fleſh as it were Fire*, as

St.

St. *James* ſpeaks: When our Bounteous Maſter ſhall become our Impartial Judge, What ſhall we have to anſwer? Or what Excuſe to offer, to mitigate that dreadful Sentence, of *being caſt out into Outer Darkneſs*; into *that* State of Puniſhment, that Part of Hell, which is moſt remote from God's Preſence? For as this is the *Fullneſs* of Light and Joy, ſo the Deprivation of it muſt be *Outer* Darkneſs, *Outer* Sorrow and Deſpair; *Weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth*, to all Eternity. Behold the Place appointed for ſuch *wicked and ſlothful Servants*, as did *but bury* their Maſter's Talent; What then ſhall be reſerv'd for thoſe, who *miſapply*, or who *ſquander them away?*

But I muſt haſten to have done.

To apply what has been ſaid to our preſent Deſign in few Words, and conclude: Whether then our meeting together be, for the promoting of Friendſhip, or doing Good to the Unfortunate by our Works of Charity, or Honour to our Founder; with ſuch innocent and holy Joy, as is the genuine Effect of ſincere Praiſe and Gratitude to God or Man: Whether, I ſay, our preſent meeting be deſign'd for any, or for all theſe Purpoſes; they will always be advanc'd beſt, by an induſtrious Improvement of thoſe Benefits we have receiv'd from God; and always hinder'd or prevented moſt, by a ſlothful Neglect or idle Abuſe of them.

Wherefore let us endeavour to render our ſelves, as far as we are able, *profitable Servants*, That by our faithful Diligence in our ſeveral Employments, we may demonſtrate our Gratitude to our Great and Gracious Maſter for the Talents we have received

from

from him; That we may be able to relieve the honeſt Wants of unſucceſsful Induſtry, and reflect ſome Credit upon thoſe Foundations from whence we have received theſe Advantages; ever promoting, ever praying for their Proſperity!

The Springs and Heads of Rivers have been look'd upon with ſo much Veneration by Pious Antiquity, that they thought them worthy of the peculiar Care of their Gods, and dedicated them to them accordingly.

What then ought we not to think of thoſe Living Springs! from whence we drew the firſt Rudiments of Piety and Learning: And how can we conclude this Diſcourſe better, than by joining all together in our Prayers to the Divine Wiſdom; That He would preſerve thoſe Fountains of Knowledge pure, and undiſturb'd; That no Brutiſh Ignorance, no Enthuſiaſtick Zeal, may pollute or divert their Sacred Streams, but that they may ever, ever flow! in ſuch a manner, as to *make glad the City of God, the Holy Place of the Tabernacles of the moſt High!*

FINIS.

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A

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Preached before the

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*Septemb*er 9. 1705.

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SERMON

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A SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN, &c.

Acts xxviii. 5, 6.

He ſhook off the Beaſt into the Fire, and felt no Harm.

Howbeit they looked when he ſhould have ſwollen, or fallen down dead ſuddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and ſaw no Harm come to him, they changed their minds, and ſaid that he was a God.

ST. *Paul* being caſt upon the Iſland *Melita*, was received by the Inhabitants, with the reſt of the Ships Company, *with no little kindneſs*, v. 2. But the holy Apoſtle being undiſtinguiſh'd in the Crowd, and ſhifting for himſelf in the Common

Calamity, gathers ſome Sticks, and ſtooping down to lay them on the Fire, a Viper, that had taken ſhelter againſt the Cold, among thoſe that had been laid on before, either refreſh'd by the gentle Heat, or enraged by the Violence of it, *came out of it and faſtened on his hand*, v. 3.

When the *Barbarians* ſaw this, their Charity was quickly loſt in their Cenſoriouſneſs, and *they ſay amongſt themſelves* (v. 4.) *No doubt this Man is a Murtherer, whom, tho he hath eſcaped the Sea, yet Vengeance ſuffereth not to live.* But he, ſupported by a lively Faith and a good Conſcience, without being ſurprized at the ſudden Danger, or concern'd at their ſudden Alteration, *Shakes off the Beaſt* calmly *into the Fire*, and ſhews, by his being ſo compos'd, that he *felt no Harm. Howbeit* (ſo loath were they to part with their Scandal) *they look'd when he ſhould have ſwollen, or fallen down dead ſuddenly: but after they looked a great while, and ſaw no Harm come to him*; then theſe Ignorant Creatures, as heavy Bodies, which are at firſt hard to be moved, but harder to be ſtopt afterwards, ran into Extremes; from Cenſure to Admiration, from Detraction to Flattery, from Slander to blaſphemous Applauſe, *They changed their minds, and ſaid that he was a God.*

Who is there that conſiders attentively the Proceeding of theſe People, *the Injuſtice of their Cenſure*, and

and *the Folly of their Applauſe*, but would immediately reſolve to avoid Judging others? ſuch eſpecially as are not at all or very little known to him; and that too, upon account of any Misfortune that ſhall befal them.

Who is there that conſiders alſo the other part of this Paſſage, *the Behaviour of the Holy Apoſtle*, but would reſolve, after his great Example, to put his Truſt in God alone, in all events; to deſpiſe equally the Cenſure and Applauſe of the Inconſtant World, and, in the Security and Tranquillity of a good Conſcience, proceed on ſteadily and faithfully in his Duty.

Theſe are the things I would fain recommend in the following Diſcourſe: in order to which I beg leave to ſhew,

I. The Unreaſonableneſs and Danger of Judging others, particularly ſuch perſons as are not at all or very little known to us, upon account of any Calamity, or any other Appearance whatſoever.

II. How a Wiſe and Good Man ought to behave himſelf, if he ſhould happen to ſuffer under any ſuch Judgment.

I. The first thing I propose, is, to shew *the Unreasonableness and Danger of Judging others, &c.* I shall do this,

1. As to the Judging others, by any Calamity which shall befal them, which the Instance in the Text leads me to directly.

There is no doubt but, where the Crime is notorious, God sometimes orders the Punishment to be such, as to be easily distinguish'd to be his own particular Act; that he may make ill People Examples to the World: and in such cases 'tis not only lawful but necessary to judge, that we may know how to beware. But then this is to be done when the Crime is plain to the whole World, not when it is uncertain whether there be any Crime at all; as it was St. *Paul*'s Case; who was a perfect Stranger to these People.

For supposing that a Private Man had Authority to judge another, how could this Judgment be right if the Person be unknown to him? all he has to be guided by are Appearances only. But our Blessed Lord commands us *not to judge by Appearances, but to judge Righteous Judgment.* As if it were impossible to judge Righteous Judgment, if we judge by Appearances alone. But of all sorts of Appearances, none are more uncertain than those which rise from Calamities and Misfortunes; and therefore 'tis most unrea-

unreaſonable to *judge ill* of others, *by the Afflictions* which they are expoſed to.

This even the moſt cenſorious wou'd be ready to acknowledge, if we ſhou'd pretend to *judge well* of others, *by their Succeſs or Proſperity.* For example, ſuppoſe any one ſhould argue thus: This Man is grown Rich of a ſudden, therefore he muſt be very honeſt: Such a one is riſen mightily in the World, therefore 'tis certain he deſerves it: Another has eſcap'd ſtrangely in ſeveral Breaches and Battels, therefore he undoubtedly fears God. There are few, I believe, that would allow theſe Concluſions to be juſt; and yet thoſe are full as unjuſt, which are drawn againſt People upon account of any Calamity: when, upon their falling into Poverty, Sickneſs, or other Misfortunes, unhappy Men ſhall be condemn'd as Murtherers and Reprobates, as guilty of ſome horrid Crime, and ſuffering for it under Divine Vengeance, tho at that very moment, they ſhall be, as the Apoſtle was, faithfully diſcharging the Duty of a good Chriſtian, and highly accepted by their God.

But the Unreaſonableneſs of judging People by any Calamity will appear, if we conſider that theſe befall the Good, as well as the Wicked. And that to good People they are intended a Mercy, and not a Puniſhment: A Mercy to themſelves, as being a means of their improving in Virtue, and of the In-

creaſe

creaſe of their Reward; and a Mercy to others, in both Reſpects, by their great Examples.

Beſides, this way of judging implies a Neceſſity of ill Mens ſuffering in this Life, which is moſt unreaſonable to be ſuppoſed by thoſe who believe a Judgment to come. Theſe People in the Text knew little of this, and therefore were not ſo much to be blamed, if they thought immediate Puniſhment attended extraordinary Crimes; but this need not be expected by any Chriſtian: He ſhould not be ſurpriz'd to ſee the Murtherer eſcape Shipwreck, the Adulterer flouriſh, the buiſy Flatterer thrive, or the bitter Detractor encourag'd and careſs'd; becauſe he knows that all theſe ſhall receive their Due hereafter, when the whole World ſhall appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt.

Add to this, That 'tis impoſſible the Bad alone, ſhould ſuffer in this Life, becauſe they are ſo mingled with the Good; live in the ſame Place, nay in the ſame Family; ſail in the ſame Ship, fight in the ſame Battel, are concern'd in the ſame Intereſt and Deſigns; that they muſt ſuffer often in the ſame manner: and conſequently, that it can never be reaſonable to conclude, that they are all Bad, and they only, that ſuffer Evil.

Furthermore, God has ſometimes particular Ends and Deſigns in the Sufferings of good Men, and recommends them to the World, by the manner of his

his protecting them, or by some sudden and unexpected turn of Prosperity, in a more remarkable manner, than if they had never been made subject to any Calamity at all. Thus the Tempest, which is related at large in the last Chapter, was the occasion of St. *Paul*'s shewing his great Wisdom, Piety and Faith, and other Virtues, which soften'd the Hearts of the Soldiers and Seamen towards him and dispos'd them, without question, to receive the Knowledge of the True God; and for the same End was it, that this Viper was suffer'd to wrap itself about his Hand, and that he was delivered so miraculously from it. What might I say of Upright *Job*, of the Patriarch *Joseph*, of *Daniel*, and other Prophets? What might I say of the Beloved Son of God himself, whom they represented in their Sufferings? Tho' his miserable Life and bitter Death, made the Gospel *a Stumbling Block to the Jews, and to the Greeks Foolishness*; yet to wise and good Men, to such *as were called, both Jews and Greeks*, it appear'd to be upon these very Accounts, *the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*; and such, have ever Glory'd in the Cross of Christ accordingly.

2. The Unreasonableness of judging by Appearances, not only as to Calamities, but as to any Appearances whatsoever, may be seen by the Rashness of Censoriousness, which will not suffer Men to examine present Circumstances, or to expect a little what

what may follow. Had those Jews, which revil'd our Saviour upon the Cross, bid him come down from thence, and they would believe in him; consider'd but a little the manner of his Accusation and Condemnation, the Temper, the Patience, the Constancy wherewith he suffer'd, and the Miracles that attended upon his Death; when the Sun was darken'd, the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, they might, as well as the Centurion, have confess'd truly this was the Son of God: How much more if they had consider'd the Power of his Resurrection, and the Glory of his Ascension.

But to come nearer to what happens almost every Day. As Providence works by Second Causes, there must often be a long train of Events, before that which is decreed is brought to pass.

So is it in the Designs of wise and good Men; these may require some time, and depend upon a long Course of Action, before they are accomplish'd. But would it be reasonable in these Cases to lay hold of any single Event, any one particular Action; and because it may seem at first to be odd or irregular, censure God and Man immediately.

If a Man should take up any part of a Machine, which he had never seen or heard of before, and that part too unfinish'd; and, without further Enquiry, condemn and despise the whole Design,

what

what would he be thought of? how much worse is it to proceed so rashly? in what concerns a Man's Reputation; nay, in what may happen to concern his Life it self?

There cannot certainly, be a more reasonable Part of Justice and Modesty; than for People to suspect their Malice, when they speak of an Enemy; or their Judgment, when they censure what they do not Understand: Because, among other Considerations, this might save them the Blush of changing their Opinion, or the Confidence of persisting in it.

But so quick is Envy, and so swift is Malice, that it seizes immediately upon the least Appearances, as if People were afraid of losing the opportunity of Detraction.

Some Holy Men, to express the Eagerness and Pleasure of their Obedience, have said it was their Meat and Drink to do the Will of God; 'tis to be fear'd, that there are many that serve the Devil with as keen an Appetite, that watch Men's Actions as hungry Beasts do their Prey, and while Railing is their constant Diet, live upon Corruption: But what is worst of all, after the fullest Entertainment they are sure to rise with a New Appetite.

Wherefore where there is this Eagerness, this Gladness, this Impatience to condemn; it must certainly be impossible for Men to judg Righteously, and consequently, unreasonable for them to judg at all.

3. Another Argument, to prove the Unreasonableness of such Judgment; is, That censorious People are the most backward in the World, to find and acknowledge themselves to be in the Wrong. 'Twas not till *after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come* to the Apostle, that these Slanderers in the Text *chang'd their Minds.*

I confess indeed, 'tis hard for those that are guilty of any Vice, to condemn themselves. The Glutton and the Drunkard, the Passionate and Revengeful, are as slow to own themselves in the Wrong, as the Covetous or Ambitious: But the Censorious are beyond all these; and the Greater the Forgery, still (as 'tis in Matters of Religion it self) the Bolder the Pretences to Infallibility; while Falshood and Defamation harden by degrees into Stubborn Pride, and then they who have dealt so freely with other People's Honour, shall become of a sudden strangely nice of their own: They know they have been base and malicious, they know that what they have said was false and unjust; but who shall dare to tell them so? For, how often has Blood and Murther follow'd? How often have whole Families, nay, whole Nations been engag'd by degrees? while some have been impos'd upon by fresh Supplies of Scandal, and others Impatient to Revenge it. So easily kindled, and yet so unquenchable is Detraction; according to that of St. *James*, (3. Cap. 5. v. &c.) *Behold, how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth; the Tongue*

Tongue is a Fire, a World of Iniquity, ſets on fire the Courſe of Nature, entails quarrels from Generation to Generation, *and is ſet on fire of Hell. For every kind of Beaſts, and of Birds, and of Serpents, and of things in the Sea, is tamed and hath been tamed of Mankind. But the Tongue can no Man tame, 'tis an unruly Evil full of deadly Poiſon: Therewith, Bleſs we God even the Father,* the common Father of us all; *and therewith curſe we Men which are made after the ſimilitude of God.* Alas! this laſt Conſideration which the Apoſtle urges ſo pathetically, is ſo far from deterring Men from this Vice, that it ſeems rather to be a Motive to it. For the more true Worth and Value, the more Wiſdom and Integrity, the more a Man has of *the Similitude of God,* the more likely is he to be defam'd; and that too, in the Name of God Himſelf.

For of all ſorts of Detractors, none faſten deeper than the Religious Backbiter: The Formal Hypocrite, while he is praiſing God and Himſelf, condemns all the World beſide: And when Slander is attended with Sighs and Groans, with Eyes and Hands that are lifted up; let the cleareſt Innocence, the moſt unſpotted Virtue look to it ſelf. For if Religion is made the Vehicle of the Poiſon, 'tis convey'd ſo ſubtlely, ſo unexpected; that it deforms, if not deſtroys the Faireſt Reputation.

4. The Unreaſonableneſs of this Vice will appear yet further, if we conſider in the next Place: That

although a Man ſhould be willing, yet it is one of the moſt difficult things in the World, next to impoſſible, to make Reſtitution of a Good Name, when he has once robb'd his Neighbour of it.

A Good Name is like Precious Oyntment, in this reſpect, as well as others; that when once thrown down, it can ſcarce ever be gathered up again, but never in its firſt purity. Becauſe, ſuppoſing any one ſhould be ſtruck with Shame and Remorſe, for having wrong'd an Innocent Perſon; yet, how can he ever make him amends? His Submiſſion and Recantation, will never reach half ſo far as his Defaming did: For nothing is ſo ſwift, ſo ſuddenly diffus'd as Defamation; it flies and blaſts like Lightning; does more Miſchief, reaches more Perſons, than he that began it can ever know, or ever acquaint with his Repentance, though he heartily deſires it.

Beſides, the Receivers of Scandal are as loath to give it up, as they who firſt ſpread it, are to give Satisfaction: For there is ſuch a Pleaſure to ſome People in believing ill of others, that to be ſet right again is a perfect Diſappointment. What muſt it be then, to own that they are ſo? yet this is not all neither, they are not only obliged to clear the Injured Party in theſe Caſes, but to accuſe themſelves; to accuſe themſelves of Credulity, ill Nature, want of Charity, Judgment, or the like; and how few! how very few! will part with Scandal upon ſuch terms as theſe are.

But

But of all the ways whereby People endeavour to make amends in this Case, the running into extreams through Ignorance or Flattery, is certainly the very worst: As when the same Men here in the Text, who had pass'd Sentence upon St. *Paul*, as a *Murtherer*; *chang'd their Minds, and said, That he was a God.* And yet something might be said in their behalf, especially as they were but *Barbarians*, as the Holy Scripture calls them. They thought, their Gods often appear'd in Humane Shapes: and they were led into this extream, by the Miracle which they saw. But what must it be for the Wise and the Knowing? What must it be for one that calls himself a Christian, to run into these Extravagancies?

The best thing that can be suppos'd in this Case, is, that they wou'd willingly make amends for what they have formerly done or said: But this is impossible, because the same Envy and Self-love, which makes People listen to Detraction, will make them shut their Ears immediately against extravagant Commendations.

Besides, this is not doing any one Justice, as is usually pretended: because, if Detraction takes from him, Flattery adds to him more than he deserves, and by so doing, causes all to be called in Question; and therefore exposes him to Contempt, only a different way.

For

For if we consider Flattery, as to him to whom it is offer'd; if he allows of it and accepts it, it is the destroying of his Understanding, instead of his Reputation; it is like poisoning by Perfumes, making a Man pleas'd with his Ruin, and beholding to you for his Destruction.

If we consider it as to those that look on: The greater Qualifications a Man has, the more dangerous will Flattery make him; for this will cause Knowledge to rankle into Pride, and Power into Oppression; and when this is not so, it will draw both into Suspicion of being misapplied: For Flattery thickens and corrupts the *Medium* between the Sense and Object, gives this a dreadful, rather than a pleasing Form; and the more it magnifies, still the more it frightens; as the Sun thro' a Mist shews greater indeed, but then shews Bloody too.

Add to this, That there are many which observe where Flatterers make their Court, where they are entertain'd, encourag'd and caress'd, and must despise the Person that is impos'd upon by them. For to believe Flattery, is to make good the worst that Detraction can say; it proves a Man to be of no Sense, no Value at all, and therefore this cannot be a proper way to make Restitution of a good Name: No, Flattery is so far from healing the Wounds which Scandal has made, that it makes them more visible and dangerous; it may take away perhaps the Sense of the Pain, but then it often ends in a Mortification.

Fifth

Fifthly and *Laſtly*, 'Tis both Unreaſonable and Dangerous to cenſure thoſe that are unknown to us, upon any Calamity, or any other Appearance whatſoever; becauſe this is meer Uſurpation, 'tis crowding into the Judgment Seat of God: according to that of St. *James*, cap. 4. v. 12. taken in a general Senſe, *There is one Lawgiver who is able to ſave and to deſtroy*; who has a Right, as well as Power, to enquire into the Breach of his own Laws, and to reward or puniſh thoſe that obſerve or neglect them; *Who art thou that judgeſt another?* Thou that art but Duſt and Aſhes, ſubject to Error and Infirmity thy ſelf, and yet takeſt upon thee that Authority over thy Fellow Servant, which belongs to God alone: The Magiſtrate indeed is God's Vicegerent in Criminal Cauſes; but that Magiſtrate does not cenſure or condemn immediately, but examines calmly, and conſiders impartially; nor is he guided by any Appearances whatſoever, but only by plain Evidences and undeniable Proofs; and after all, is as willing, at leaſt to acquit as to condemn, becauſe 'tis the Crime, and not the Perſon, that he is concern'd about: But in Cenſoriouſneſs, 'tis quite contrary; here 'tis the Perſon, and not the Crime that is purſued; here 'tis Anger, Envy or Revenge, that whet the Detractor, not the Love of Virtue, or the Deſire of Reformation in the Party concern'd; for how often is he guilty himſelf of the ſame Fault? or how willing would he be to con-

connive at it, or excuſe it in another? wherefore this is not only the judging others without any Authority, but the judging of them with the greateſt Partiality; and therefore muſt be allow'd to be moſt dangerous, if ſuch People can believe any thing of a World to come. For this is againſt all the Rules of Moral Juſtice; no civiliz'd Nation but has ſhew'd its Abhorrence of Sycophants and Detractors. But this is much more againſt the Dictates of our Holy Religion, againſt that Charity and Love, which the Goſpel of Peace breaths thro' every part of it. Againſt that Holy Example of Truth, Juſtice, Mercy, and every kind of doing good, which our Bleſſed Lord hath ſet before us; *who did no Sin, neither was any Guile*, any Falſhood or Deceit *found in his Mouth*. Was not He a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with every kind of Grief? did He ſuffer ſuch a Life and ſuch a Death? and doſt thou cenſure all thoſe for Wicked Men, that fall under any Calamity? did not He command thee to love thine Enemies? and doſt thou rail ſo heartily at thy Friends? doſt thou invert the Order of Nature and Chriſtianity, and curſe them that bleſs thee? hate them that do good to thee, and deſpightfully uſe and perſecute thoſe that pray for thee? and ſhall not *this very Jeſus*, whoſe Commands thou doſt thus deſpiſe, come to Judge thee at the laſt Day? Remember thoſe Words of his; St. *Matt.*

Matt. 7. 1, 2. Judge not, leſt ye be judged: For with what Judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged; and with what Meaſure ye meet, it ſhall be meaſured unto you again. And think how dreadfully this Threat ſhall be put in Execution, at that great and Terrible Day of the Lord.

And thus I have gone through what I propos'd, as to the firſt general Head of this Diſcourſe; and ſhew'd, the Unreaſonableneſs and Danger of judging others, eſpecially ſuch Perſons as are not at all, or very little known to us, upon account of any Calamity; becauſe they that judge *ill* of ſome upon this Ground, will not allow that we ſhould judge *well* of others only upon account of their Proſperity. Becauſe Calamitys befal both the Good and the Bad, and therefore can be no certain Diſtinction of one Man from another: Beſides this implys a neceſſity of bad Mens ſuffering according to their Deſerts in this Life; which is the more unreaſonable, becauſe we believe a Judgment to come; and withal, the Good and Bad are ſo mingled in this Life, that 'tis impoſſible the Bad alone ſhould ſuffer; becauſe too, God has often particular Deſigns in the Sufferings of good Men.

In the next place, I ſhew'd the Unreaſonableneſs and Danger of judging thoſe that are unknown to us, upon account, not only of theſe Appearances, but alſo any others whatſoever; becauſe of the Raſhneſs and Ignorance of ſuch Judgment; be-

cauſe the moſt Cenſorious are the moſt backward to find, or to own themſelves in the wrong; and tho' they ſhould be willing to do ſo, yet 'tis impoſſible to reſtore a good Name by any Endeavours whatſoever, but eſpecially by running into Flattery. Laſtly, becauſe of the Uſurpation and Partiality which Men are guilty of in ſuch Judgments, and the Certainty of their Suffering in the ſame Meaſure hereafter. From what has been ſaid upon this Head, I ſhall draw but one ſhort Inference, and then proceed to the other.

If it be ſo unreaſonable, ſo unjuſt and dangerous to cenſure ſuch People as the worſt of Men, as are unknown to us, upon account of ſome Calamity, or ſome other outward Appearance only; then how much more muſt it be all this, to detract from thoſe who have no ſuch Appearances, but who are known to their very Detractors, to be Men of great Virtues, Piety, Honour, Integrity, and the like?

Backbiting and Slander, are the common Effects of all the Vices that we are guilty of towards our Neighbour: The Covetuous rail at thoſe they ought to relieve; the Cowardly to diſguiſe their Fears, and promote their Revenge; the Ambitious to make way for their Advancement; and the Vain-glorious to recommend themſelves. Alas, how many Cauſes are there of this Evil! yet ſtill this uſed to creep abroad in Whiſpers, and be ſpread about with mighty Caution, and ſolemn Ties of Secrecy. It uſed to

be

be the *Peſtilence that walked in Darkneſs*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks; but now *'tis the Arrow that flyeth by day*. Now 'tis practis'd openly, and almoſt every where, become a kind of Art, regulated and methodiz'd, while thouſands rail as they are inſtructed, and defame in Factions and Parties. Alas, how far is this from Chriſtianity (as I have already ſhewn) and what muſt be the diſmal Conſequences of it! 'Tis this that keeps up our Diviſions, and widens our Breaches every Day; and where this Envy and Strife is, Confuſion and every evil Work muſt neceſſarily follow. How very reaſonable is it therefore in the next place,

II. To give ſome Rules how a wiſe and good Man ought to behave himſelf, if he happens to ſuffer under this Evil.

'Tis moſt probable, that the Holy Apoſtle took little notice of what theſe People ſaid of him, or of their Behaviour towards him; that he was not mov'd with their Cenſure, but ſhook it off as he did the Viper, and that he regarded as little afterwards their ſecond ſudden Change, in their extravagant Applauſe; for his Thoughts were taken up with greater Objects, and his Soul more nobly employ'd; either rais'd up to Heaven, by a lively Faith and Dependance upon his God; or elſe contriving which way to diſcharge beſt, the great Truſt that was repos'd in him, in the Converſion of the Gentiles.